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spective vision, unequalled by any among living psychologists, he had also the power of so embodying an idea that it would stand out and let one walk all round it.

FICTION

THE DOCTOR'S CHRISTMAS EVE. By JAMES LANE ALLEN. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910.

THAT the undissolved differences of parents become the sufferings of children is one of the familiar facts, known but too little realized. It is the expiation of the parent's sin or mistake which Mr. Allen takes as his theme in this, the second volume of his Christmas trilogy.

Christmas is *par excellence* the festival of the home; the apotheosis of all that makes for family bonds, loyalty and honor. In dealing with it, its symbolism and its significance, Mr. Allen is likewise dealing with the main factor of family life, the monogamic principle. He shows in both the first two books tragedies that may result from the fact that civilization, having produced a woman, whose instinct is entirely monogamic, has left man with an instinct imperfectly so.

In the "Bride of the Mistletoe" the husband, in expounding for his wife the Christmas symbols, yet shows her that it is inherent in man to have wandering affections. As he craves a wide knowledge of life and of the earth, so also he craves a wide experience of emotion. In the first book he shows us how the *Wanderlust* of the heart may fall upon a man midway in life. That volume closes with the picture of a wounded woman bearing her hurt, as women do, for the sake of the next generation.

The "Doctor's Christmas Eve" gives us the second assault upon the monogamic principle, and the doctor, who is able, kindly and serviceable, lives out his life with the love of his friend's wife in his heart. It never reaches expression, but it causes an imperfect spiritual relation between the doctor and his wife and results in moral frailty in their two children—an impertinent and selfish little girl and a boy robbed of his greatest natural moral support—his love of his mother. One might be inclined to quarrel with Mr. Allen as to the working out of his story. The natural biological bond in a family is that between mother and son, father and daughter. That bond between the mother and son is the strongest natural tie on earth and is rarely broken except by the mother's unworthiness. The chances are that an unloved wife would have a son more like herself and more bound to her than other women. However, in Mr. Allen's story, the son turns wholly to the father, and his strongest dramatic climax is where the little boy, standing by his father's error, repudiates his mother. The boy suffers vicariously and dies for his father's sin. It seems almost an unnecessary amount of expiation for what is recorded as no more than an erring heart.

It is no new thing for an author to begin by being popular and then to produce books which will only be read after they have been adequately interpreted. Mr. Allen has been very popular, but his last two books are not light or easy reading. Even the hardened critic may come at them at first with a little impatience. Here is a biological problem, which we are accustomed to find treated with brutal realism or scientific accuracy, all veiled in symbolism and poetry. Moreover, it is a biological problem

etherialized, made purely psychic in our American air. There is no question of anything but a mental infidelity, and yet in an atmosphere where mind and spirit are as real as the body itself this error reaps physical vengeance.

There are passages of high poetry in Mr. Allen's book. There are four charmingly drawn children. There is all the breath and the air and the soil of Kentucky. One may take it, according to temperament, as a fault or a gain that Mr. Allen has reached the point where he can no longer tell a simple, realistic story. All the meanings of life, of growth, of death, press hurriedly into his consciousness. If the clock ticks, he hears the pulse of the ages. If a wild beast at the village circus gives forth his lonely jungle cry, he hears the tiger and the ape still mumbling in the soul of man and above it the high command that was uttered on Mount Sinai. In the speeches of children he hears the minds of their forefathers and knows the quality of the soil upon which they grew. When the hymn of Bethlehem sounds, he hears as overtones the prayer in Gethsemane.

In the beginning of the book there are touches of *naïveté* that baffle the reader, but he is a feeble and superficial critic who, reading the book carefully to the end, fancies that he has dealt with light matter.

THE BIRD IN THE BOX. By MARY MEARS. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1910.

The novel in our own land has almost completely divorced itself from literature. It has become to literature what the photograph is to painting—a cheap, convenient, serviceable substitute made of the narrow realism which is a poor substitute for truth. As one may have thousands of photographs more easily than one painting, so one may have thousands of novels for one scrap of literature. But there is and will always be a remnant of mankind who prefer art to artifice, truth, however large, to a small realism. It was then the artistic endeavor, the sheer love of beauty, the reach after a symbol which should contain some vestige of a higher truth, which we hailed some years since in "The Breath of the Runners," by Mary Mears. Since then Miss Mears has published some minor work, but the real successor to the "Breath of the Runners" has come in "The Bird in the Box." It is a poetic and noble treatment of a familiar subject, a woman's heart caught and prisoned in the wrong cage. Through labor and devotion and, finally, through the ultimate self-surrender in death, liberty is won. It is the study of a soul not wholly glad, but eager, agitated, sensuous, seeking deliverance from the solicitations of a pessimistic solution of life, and finding at last, in complete renunciation, the higher faith, the ultimate peace.

Miss Mears's especial gift is the artist's vision. Daughter and sister of artists, reared in the immediate environment of so great an artist as Augustus St.-Gaudens, Miss Mears not only sees more, but sees more beautifully than the average writer. Ships, seas, buildings, city streets, men and women are all seen afresh by the eye of a true artist. Moreover, she has told her story so that it awakens a given state of mind, induces a mood even as music does, and finally leaves a memory that smokes like a censer and smells like a rose. The supreme novel in this *genre* is, of course, Pater's "Marius," but wherever a writer, in even a slight degree, aims at